

Senator Kushner, Senator Porter, members of the Committee, thank you for taking the time to consider this important legislation, and to hear my testimony. I come here in my capacity as a member of Hartford City Council to ask you to approve this bill. As you know, Hartford is a poor city. I imagine you also know, Hartford is a hardworking city. Our residents work long hours, often for low wages, staffing the restaurants and service businesses that keep the entire region running. Many of those businesses keep this Assembly fed, clothed, and able to do its important work, as well.

As some of you know, being poor is exhausting and stressful. Money is always tight, and the risk of a medical emergency, a rent increase, or a car breakdown is a constant worry. For working families, this stress and uncertainty are compounded by the conduct of large, low-wage employers, who often treat their employees as practically disposable. They have no hesitation about changing and shuffling work schedules, increasing or decreasing hours, or canceling entire shifts. Those sorts of decisions may make good business sense, but they also create ripples of instability that radiate outward through our whole city, and through other communities in Connecticut.

I hear more and more often from constituents who are contending with evictions after they couldn't keep a job because of fluctuating schedules. In my day job, as a public defender in juvenile court, I routinely see how a parent's unstable schedule and low wages affect children – depriving them of stability and guidance, and leading to academic problems and court involvement, either through DCF or an arrest. And that's to say nothing of the well documented, widespread effects on family mental and physical health that unstable work schedules and incomes create.

The people of Hartford, and of all of Connecticut, are entitled to dignity in their work and in their lives, and the basic guarantees of House Bill 5353 will help secure that dignity. If the result is an increase in costs, it is preferable that those costs be borne by big companies and their customers than by our state's most vulnerable working people. Business convenience can never be more important than families' basic humanity and ability to live safe, fulfilling lives.